THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

issue 1

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Wake up.

The Matrix Online is the future of the Matrix, picking up right where the trilogy left off. The revolution is over, but within the Matrix a secret war still rages — a war of control between the Machines, the Exiles and the people of Zion. Come join the continuing storyline of the Matrix where *you* decide who to oppose and what to believe. Only *your* courage and perseverance can protect the legacy of Neo's sacrifice.

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Editor Bill Rosemann
Art Director Maria P. Cabardo
Designer Mike Zagari
Director, Creative Services Ron Perazza
Senior VP, Creative Director Richard Bruning

MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

Online Content Lead Chris Mancil
Art Director Andy Hoyos
Lead Designer Toby Ragaini
Game Designer Brannon Boren
Game Master Richard Covi
Game Master Rachel David
Production Assistant Kristine Bryan
Associate Producer John Petrick
Online Community Lead Dan Myers

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By Chris Mancil,
Online Content Lead

PLAYER SPOTLIGHT:

THE BETA TEST

Imagine playing a game months before the rest of the world. Now imagine having that opportunity and also being asked to contribute feedback to positively impact the finished product. As hardcore gamers know, for a select group of players known as beta testers, this dream is actually a reality.

For The Matrix Online, beta testing is more than finding bugs and reporting problems, it's about making fundamental contributions to the game across all spectrums of development. One of the most important of these contributions is something that can't be attained unless the game has access to thousands of great people who actively play online together: a sense of community.

While countless testers continue to supply their feedback and analysis to our Development team each day, a few outstanding players contributed a great deal more for the benefit of the community. By hosting tournaments, running events, creating fashion shows and even the occasional late night after-event party, a few of our players worked extremely hard to make The Matrix Online a fantastic place to play each day.

For their ongoing efforts and dedication to the testing of the game, and their extraordinary contributions to the community, we are excited to present Player Spotlight.

TO APPLY TO BECOME A BETA TESTER,
GO TO THEMATRIXONLINE.COM

Beta Testing Is More Than Finding Bugs, It's About Building A Community

DJ SUNDOG QUICK FACTS

Faction: Zion
Preferred Skill Set: Spy (Assassin/Knife-thrower)
Preferred Weapon: A good disguise
Crew/Group: The Royal Guard
Favorite District and Neighborhood: International District/Ikebukuro
Best Bullet Time Moment: I was walking down on the wharf in Ikebukuro, being a shady character; so I donned the disguise of a waiter, delivering lunch to one of the warehouses in the area. I turned a corner, and three Phoenix gang members were standing there with their backs to me: opportunity calling, no doubt about it. I dropped the fake lunch, and before the biggest of the three knew what hit him, I had grabbed him around the neck. Bullet time ensued, and I executed a perfect Spin Throw, instantly terminating him when he hit the ground. And it felt good, so good...

DJ SUNDOG

One of the most famous members of The Matrix Online beta test is DJ Sundog, founder of Radio Free Zion (www.radiofreezion.com), the most popular live broadcast radio station in and outside of the game. Sundog is also a member of The Royal Guard, a highly respected player faction that stands for fair play, honor, dignity and commitment–four qualities that Sundog certainly exemplifies.

The Royal Guard is also the faction known for throwing the some of the best parties, with a crew of very talented DJ's. Sundog is usually broadcasting the play-by-play of Live Events and mixing dance music for the listening pleasure of developers and beta testers during the day, or at in-game parties at the chicest clubs of The City.

"I really see a dynamic community coming together. Community events, social activities...that's what really makes a MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Game)," Sundog said. "These are the things that will make The Matrix Online an unbeatable game experience and will keep me coming back for years to come. So far we're right on track, and I really hope to continue being able to bring something to the game with everyone else at Radio Free Zion, that makes it more fun for everyone."

"YOU'RE LISTENING TO RADIO FREE ZION, THE VOICE OF A NEW REDPILL GENERATION." - SUNDOG

DJ SANDMAN

DJ Sandman was the first tester to host a Player vs. Player combat tournament inside of The Matrix Online at Jacob's Ladder, a warehouse club located near Apollyon. Dozens of testers from all over The City participated in this single-elimination duel tournament. The grand prize of 3,000,000 information attracted the heaviest and most deadly warriors from all across the Matrix. Not only did DJ Sandman plan and host the event, he alsoconducted the play-by-play simulcast, with The Royal Guard providing music before and after the event.

The club was packed with contestants and spectators alike, and it is widely known inside The Matrix Online that when DJ Sandman throws a party, it's a real rumble of a good time. He is planning to host a highly anticipated second PvP tournament in late December. DJ Sandman is also a proud member of the Collective fac-

DJ SANDMAN

DJ SANDMAN QUICK FACTS

Faction: Machines
Preferred Skill Set: Soldier/Martial Arts/Kung Fu
Preferred Weapon: Assault Rifle
Crew/Group: The Collective
Favorite District and Neighborhood: International/Akasaka
Best Bullet Time Moment: This has to be the first time I experienced bullet time, which is also the first time I activated and successfully hit the Guard Breaker uppercut move...my jaw dropped when it happened and I've loved it ever since.

tion (www.thecollectiveguild.com), one of the oldest and largest player organizations in the game.

"LET'S GET IT ON!"
-DJ SANDMAN

"I hope to hold more duel tournaments, and see them become a frequent event inside of the Matrix. I would also like to see the Collective rise to the power that it's destined to obtain," DJ Sandman said. "But my personal goal in the Matrix has always been to take out Morpheus. I love the idea of truly having an effect on the story of the game and taking out a major character like him would be an awesome moment!"

TBONE

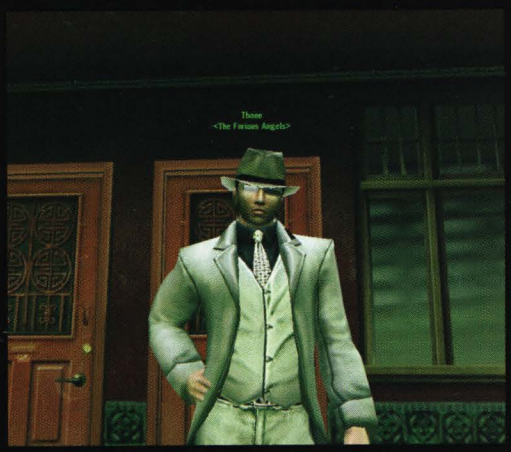
Tbone is the Commander of The Furious Angels, one of the largest player factions in The Matrix Online. While the Furious Angels' recruitment post inside of The Matrix Online beta forums collected

"COMBAT NEVER GETS OLD"
-TBONE

1,300 posts from testers who sought entry into their faction, seeking entry to their website (www.followtheangel.org) is not easy, as it lies hidden among a challenging puzzle of clues and mysteries. It is only by overcoming these obstacles that applicants can find their home page and petition to join The Furious Angels.

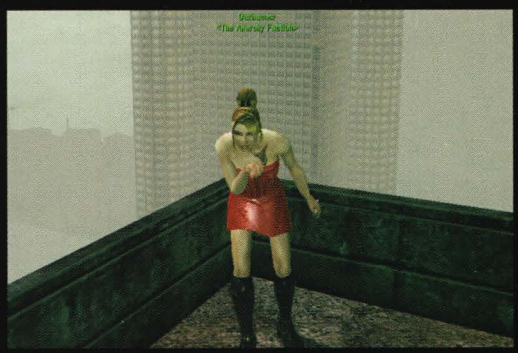
Running a large player faction and creating challenging online puzzles are not the only elements motivating Tbone to play The Matrix Online, as he also enjoys the modern urban environment setting of the game. "I like the fact that there is finally a more realistic MMOG," Tbone explained. "Granted, the Matrix is not 'real,' but it is simulated to be real. The urban setting and modern ways of combat appeal to me much more than the traditional fantasy swing-my-sword-at-you MMOG. Also, the combat never gets old, and it seems that all the elements are there to begin a truly immersive storyline. It's amazing how much I feel like I am in the Matrix when I game."

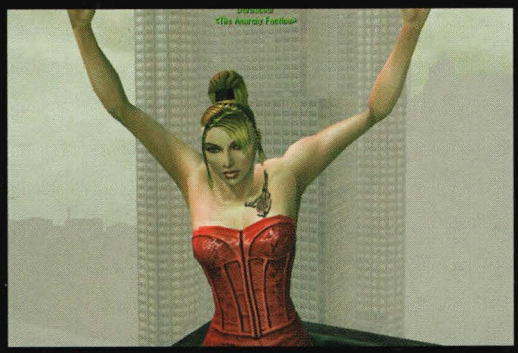
TBONE



TBONE QUICK FACTS

Faction: Zion
Preferred Skill Set: Martial Arts/Kung Fu
Crew/Group: Commander of the Furious Angels
Favorite District and Neighborhood: International District
Best Bullet Time Moment: Performing Guard Breaker for the first time. Uppercut to the jaw in slow-mo! Ouch!





DARBACOUR QUICK FACTS

Faction: radical Zionist.

Preferred Skill Set:
I have started exploring Network Hacker in the Virologist tree. I have many Patcher skills but my heart is definitely with Virologist… or Nuker.

Preferred Weapon: Enhanced Edison BR-23 or Enhanced Whitfield Code launcher.

Crew/Group: The Anarchy Faction crew Styx

Favorite District and Neighborhood: I like Edgewater, because it's so gritty and industrial, but Historic is beautiful. Baldwin Heights, we can get rich there. Or the Archive. I love the Archive. O.K., I love it all, darn it!

Best Bullet Time Moment: Hackers are allergic to Interlock.

Best Hack moment: Last week at the GM tourney when I put Walrus' winning streak to bed.

DARBACOUR

Darbacour is an elite beta tester who is highly respected by the development team for the sheer volume of clear and accurate bug reports and imbalances she has found during her time in the beta. Darbacour is also establishing a player faction of mature, independent type players called The Anarchy Faction. Additionally, Darbacour is not only renowned for her bug finding skills, but also for her play. One of the rare few to reach level 50, Darbacour is easily one of the most powerful players in the game.

"I LOVE THE WALRUS. BUT I LOVE PWNING HIM EVEN MORE."

– DARBACOUR

On a few occasions, she has demonstrated her abilities for all to see. In a recent in-game beta event, The Matrix Online Game Masters challenged the community to one-on-one duels with the team. The GM's graciously allowed players the chance to defeat them in combat before the game launches in January and they become permanently invincible. While the fun was occurring inside the game, The Matrix Online's Community Lead, Dan "Walrus" Myers, joined in on the action, letting the fans take their shot at the "voice of the development team."

The mighty Walrus had been victorious… until Darbacour appeared on the scene. With amazingly fast and brutal moves, Darbacour laid out Walrus in almost record-breaking time. "I hit Walrus with Disrupt Inputs, White Noise and then Logic Cannon 2.0," Darbacour explained after the duel. "The first two are debuffs that immobilized him in order to allow Logic Cannon enough time to deliver its payload before he could Interlock me. I love the Walrus, but I love PWNing him even more."

ELGHINTHEMAD

While ElghintheMad is not very famous inside the community of The Matrix Online beta test, he is extremely popular inside the ranks of the development team. In fact, Elghin is one of the very best testers in the entire online beta. After receiving his beta invitation this fall, ElghintheMad reported over 200 verifiable bugs during his first five weeks of play.

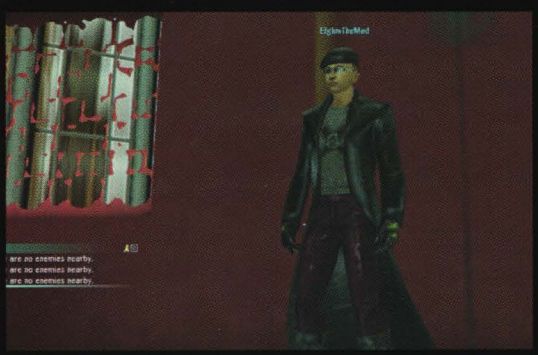
"NEVER EVER FORGET TO LOOT. THAT WOULD BE LIKE FORGETTING TO BREATHE." -ELGINTHEMAD

Elghin told the development team he was very happy with the quality of the GM and Q&A teams after reporting that many bugs. "I have tested a lot of games over the last years, and I received a response to every single bug report from The Matrix Online team. I couldn't believe it," ElghintheMad said. "I feel privileged to be a part of The Matrix Online beta test. To not only experience a game that looks and plays so unique, but to contribute and work with the development team on their goals and design of the game."

ElghintheMad is a veteran of many MMOGs wo finds The Matrix Online experience far more compelling than previous online games. "The Matrix Online is unique in several ways," Elghin explained. "I like the fact that it incorporates the third dimension to some degree. You technically can't fly in the game, but it comes damn close with the use of certain abilities.

The graphics also seem a notch above anything else I have played. I'm also a big fan of the new 'interlock' combat system. I actually get to think about how I should fight a battle and what abilities I should use, instead of the usual 'point-click-cook dinner' combat that is generally the type of fighting you see in a game like this. Lastly, the skill tree is very diverse, and allows a player to pursue several different paths. The fact that I'm not locked into a specific character type is a giant plus for a game like this." X

ELGINTHEMAD



ELGINTHEMAD QUICK FACTS

Character Name: ElghinTheMad

Faction: Not Merovingian

Preferred Skill Set: Kung Fu with a minor in Coding for repair/crafting

Preferred Weapon: Hands

Crew/Group: None as of yet. Running solo...

Favorite District and Neighborhood: Downtown/Central Park, of course.

Best Bullet Time Moment: Off-the-wall kick to the head!

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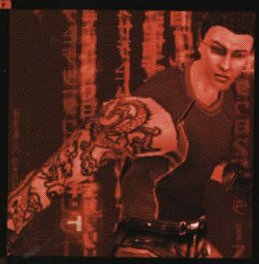
Creating your Character Within The Matrix

SWALLOW THE RED PILL

Your life was ordinary. You woke up in the morning, worked during the day and came home at night. You had transient social experiences with other people along the way, but they were only tiny blips in the smooth landscape of your passive existence.

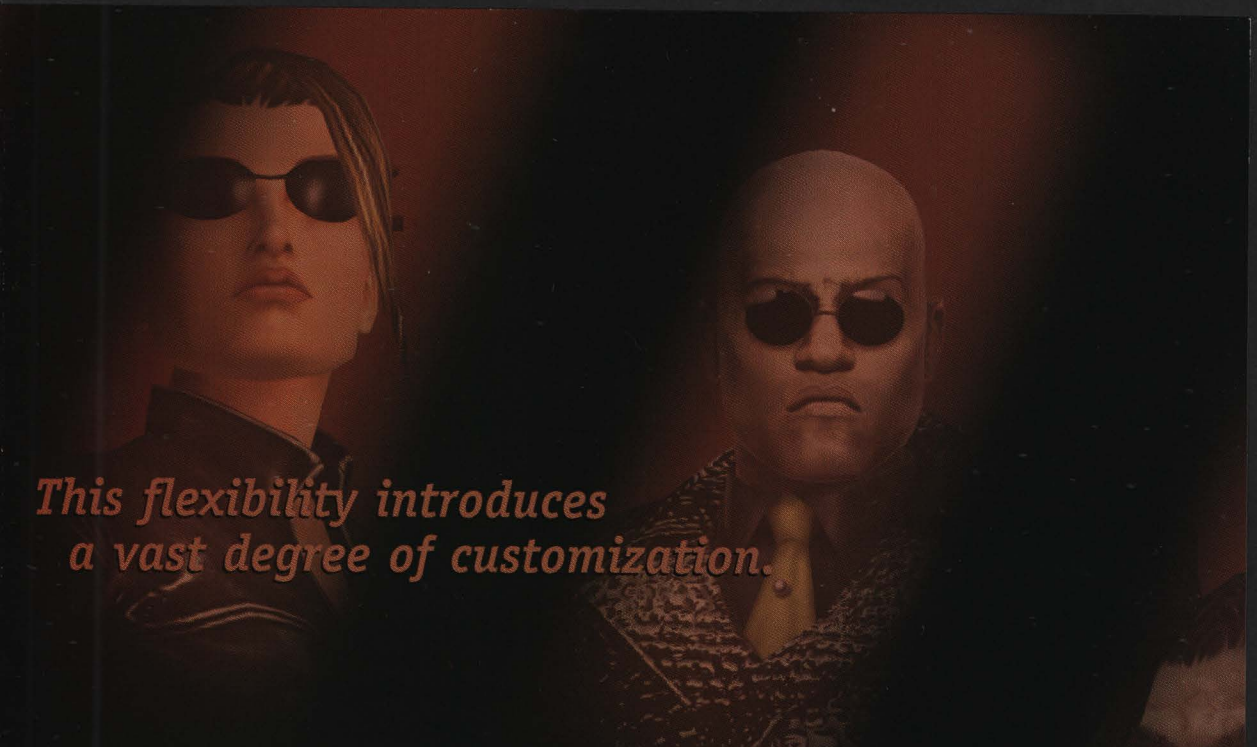
Everyone thinks that this routine defines you. Depressing, really. There was always...something missing. And then one day you learned the truth, and were given the rare opportunity to redefine your life by Awakening as a sentient—and free—human being.



Character generation in The Matrix Online begins as the warriors of Zion watch your naïve bluepill self-image wander through the Matrix. The first step in your Awakening as a redpill is determining your personality profile, with choices ranging from the "troubled intellectual" who feels the logic of the universe is somehow wrong, to the "rebel" who can't accept his role in the current authority structure. These personality choices will affect your five main traits: Perception (combat abilities), Focus (stealth abilities), Reason (hacking abilities), Belief (inner strength) and Vitality (health).

At this point you can also customize the appearance of your residual self-image by choosing your gender, physical size, hairstyle, facial features and clothing—even a variety of tattoos can be selected. Later you may find or purchase additional outfits and equipment that will not only enhance your abilities, but also your personal sense of style.

By Lee Hammock and Kristine Bryan



This flexibility introduces a vast degree of customization.

The final step in this process is choosing a name—both as a redpill (how you will be known among your crewmates and in the Matrix) and as a bluepill (the name you lived under prior to your Awakening). For example, Neo's name before his Awakening was "Thomas Anderson." The ideal redpill name should express an aspect of your personality.

It's a hard thing, realizing your entire life up until this point has been nothing but a dream. Reality hits hard. It's a cold and bleak world in the real, and technology beyond your wildest perception has controlled your reality since day one. Until now, that is. Now that you've swallowed the red pill, you can choose who you want to be.

Using the Matrix as a tool, instead of being used by it, you can now "jack in" and take an active role in defining your place in the universe. You start with only a few skills, of course. However, as you accomplish goals and defeat enemies in the Matrix, you will grow more mental capacity (via leveling up) to access new and more effective special abilities and powers.

One of the benefits of being a redpill is the unique ability to change out powers and skills while inside the Matrix. These computer load-outs can be as simple as being a Sniper, or as complex as being a Kung Fu master. For example, perhaps you've just finished using some Aikido abilities to take out an Exile, and now you need to disguise yourself as a different program to accomplish a stealthy new sabotage mission against the Machines. By returning to a hardline (bluepills call them telephone booths!) and downloading new skills from your operator, you can switch out some combat abilities for hacker abilities to get the job done. The more mental capacity you have, the more abilities you can keep in active memory.

Now you begin to see that the Matrix is all about code and information. If you have access to the code, you can do just about anything. There is no spoon.

There are three primary ability trees that branch off from your newly Awakened status: Operative, Hacker and Coder. Each tree breaks down into additional, more focused trees, each with their own group of skills that you can reach by mastering more basic abilities or by acquiring the code in the Matrix.

If you think you'll end up in combat, or need to sneak around, you'll want to take skills from the Operative tree. Some of these abilities will help you master a specific combat style, such as firearms or several different styles of martial arts such as Karate, Kung Fu and Aikido. Others give you access to new combat maneuvers, such as Pistol Evasion (imagine the difficulty of hitting an opponent who performs cartwheels while returning fire). Others increase your potential to move unseen or strike at enemies with sneak attacks.

If you find that taking out an enemy with a computer virus seems to be the best plan, or if you need to heal your fellow redpills, you'll want to explore skills in the

Hacker tree. Hacker abilities allow you to actually create and change pre-existing bits of code that make up the Matrix using information (the only real currency of the Matrix) and code fragments.

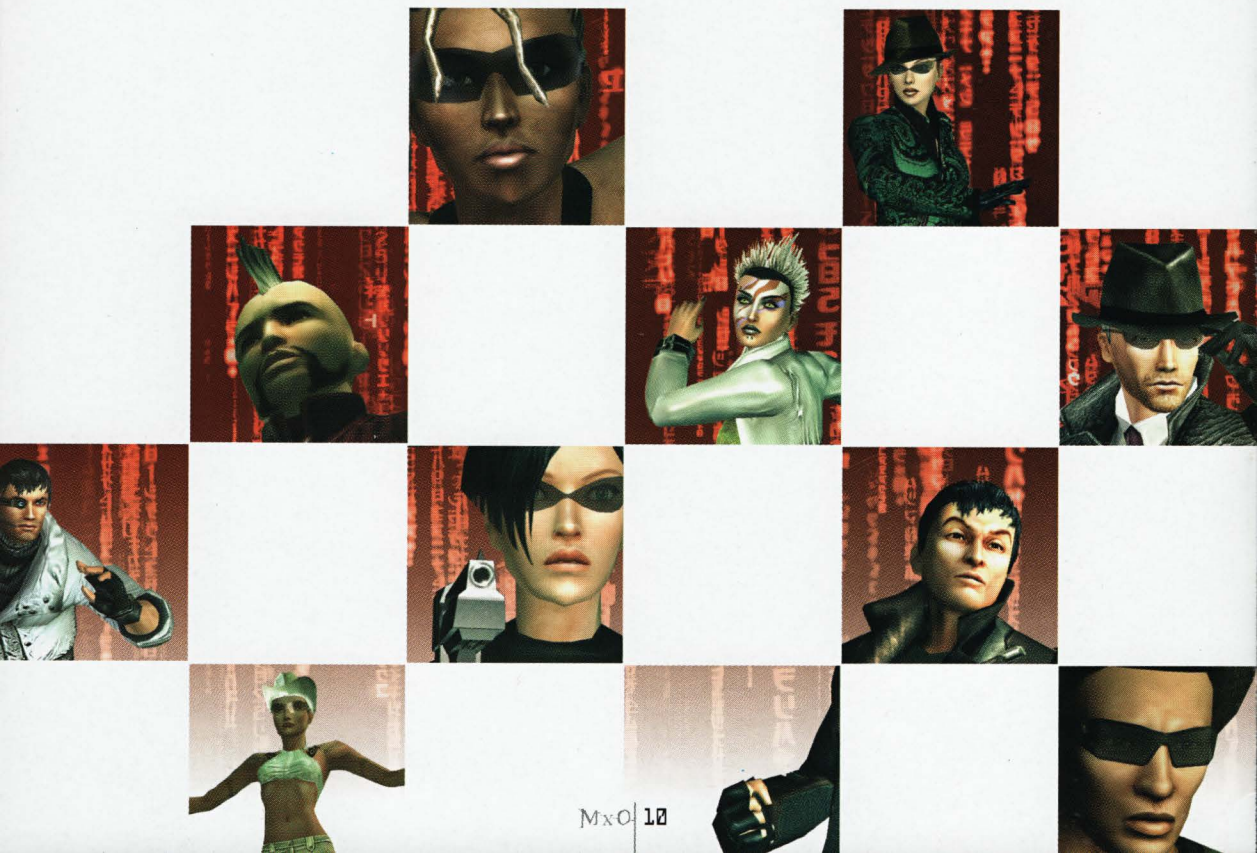
Finally, if you're interested in the creation of items and other programs within the Matrix, you should examine the Coder tree. Using code, you can create weapons, clothing and even limited programs which can act as bodyguards and fight for you. Bluepills might call this magic...but you know better.

In the beginning, you asked, "What is the Matrix?" Now, the question becomes much more immediate: "What will the Matrix become?"

Because the Warriors of Zion freed you, your first missions in the Matrix will reflect their beliefs—freeing bluepills while still attempting to maintain Neo's fragile peace. Arrayed against Zion, however, are the Machines and the Exiles, both of whom want the humans to stay within the Matrix to make sure it has sufficient power to continue operations. These other factions are not merely villains, however, for they do have compelling motivations. If enough humans are released from the Matrix it will collapse, destroying the Machines and the Exiles along with dooming those humans still connected.

Individuals from these other factions are willing to speak with you and explain their ideologies. Perhaps you will be moved by the plight of the bluepills that could be left behind. Maybe you'll sympathize with the needs of the Exiles or Machines. Or perhaps you'll find even more belief in the tenets of Zion.

Once you swallow the red pill, the choices become yours. Choose wisely. X



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Metro World MAP

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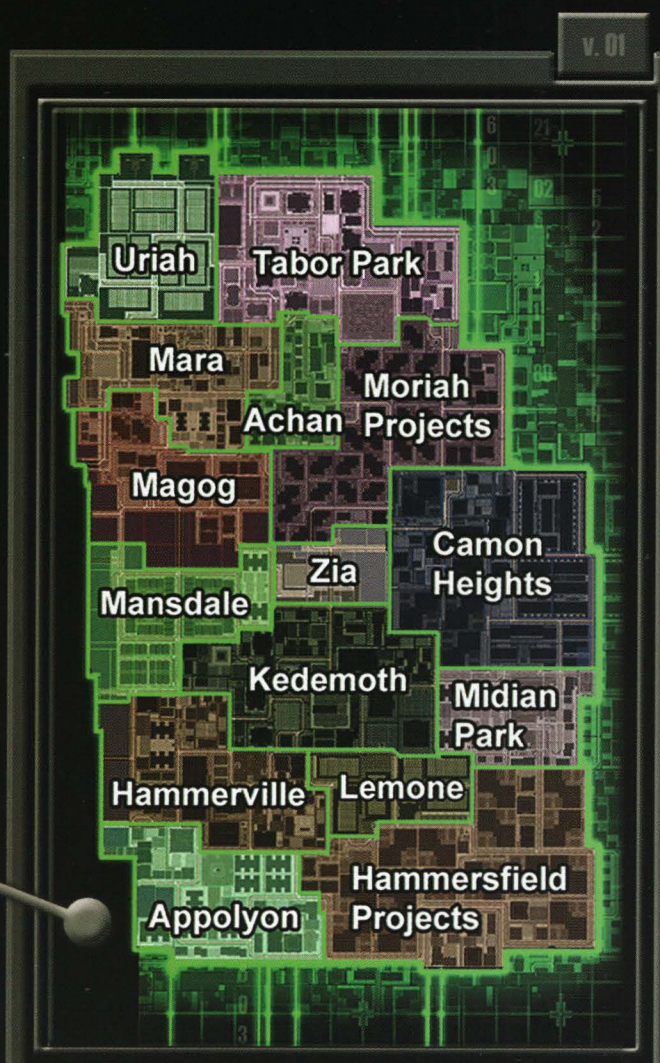
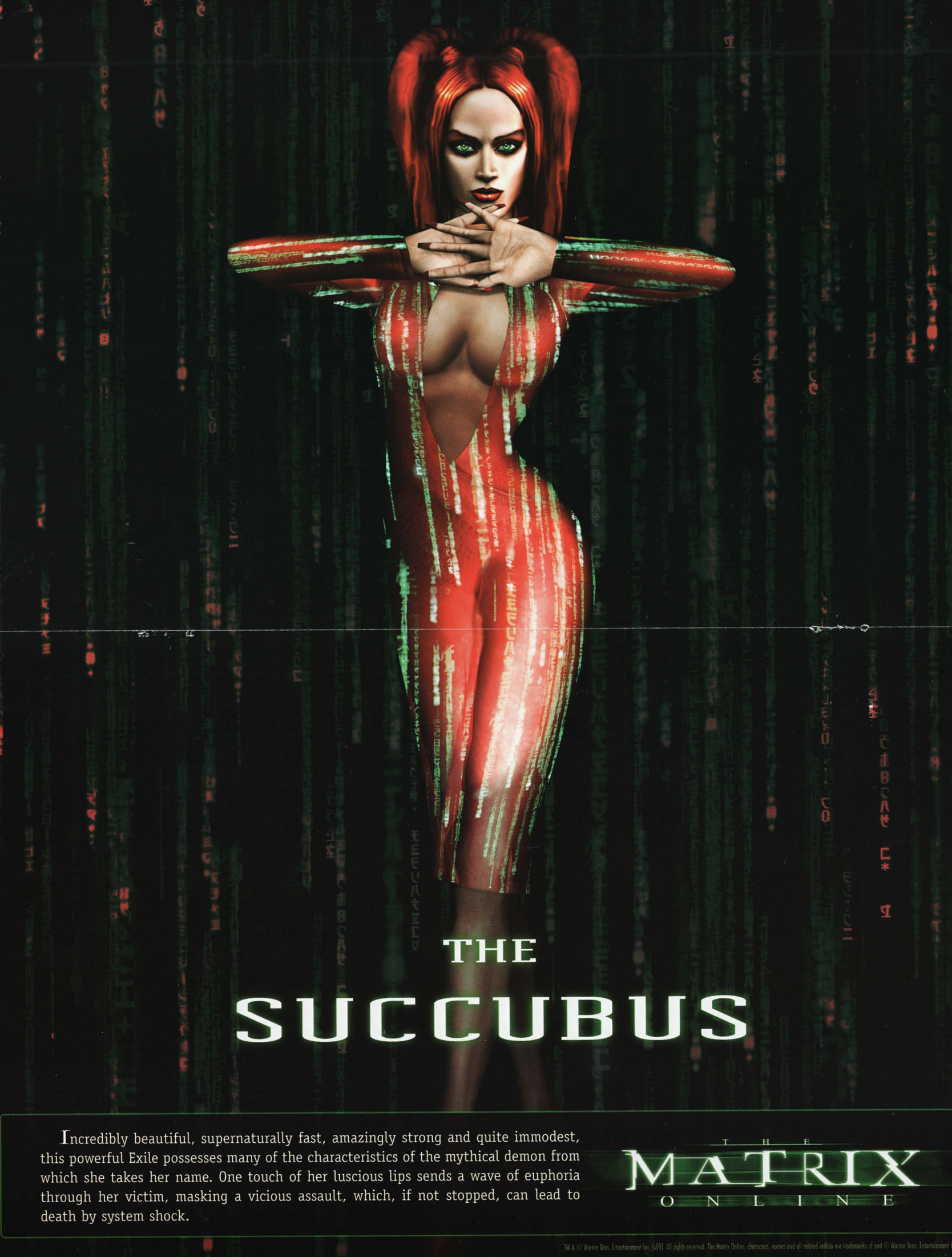


Richland Slums

COLLECTIBLE PULL-OUT POSTER

#1 OF 4



THE SUCCUBUS

Incredibly beautiful, supernaturally fast, amazingly strong and quite immodest, this powerful Exile possesses many of the characteristics of the mythical demon from which she takes her name. One touch of her luscious lips sends a wave of euphoria through her victim, masking a vicious assault, which, if not stopped, can lead to death by system shock.

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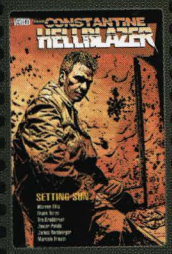

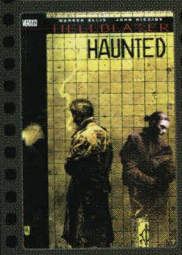

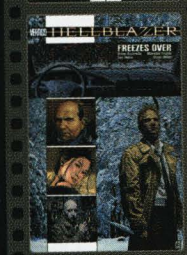

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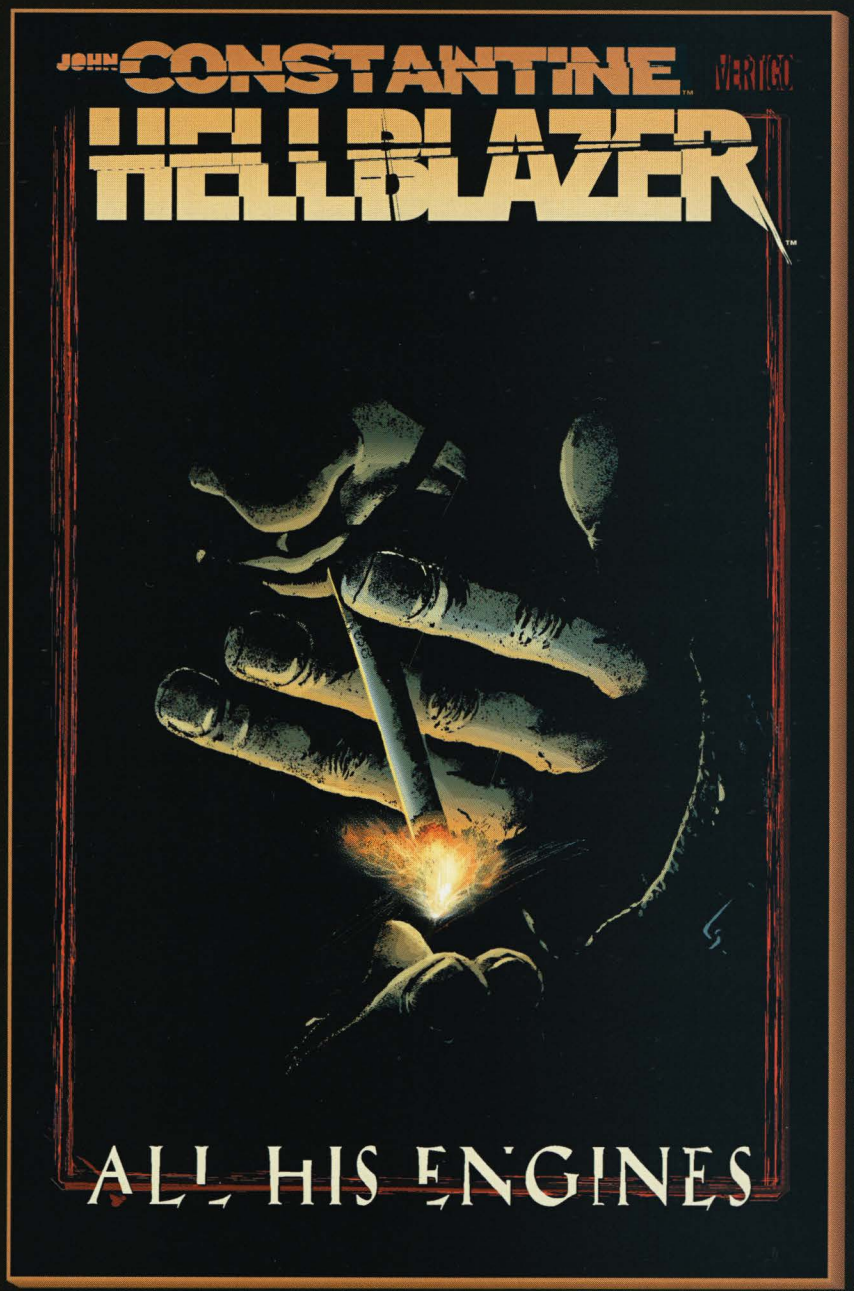

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PAUL CHADWICK: Writing The Matrix

THE MAN BEHIND THE MYSTERIES

Award-winning creator of the acclaimed comic book series *Concrete,* Paul Chadwick was handpicked by the Wachowskis to continue the story of the Matrix through The Matrix Online. As the head writer, Chadwick has been the principle force in determining its overall story, and as the push for the launch intensified, he took some time to give us some insight into the game and the aspects of it that he crafted.

What are the major themes and goals of the first year of The Matrix Online?

The Wachowskis were very definite: this first year is about peace and the things people do to wreck it. In other words, they didn't want Neo's sacrifice to be meaningless, and have a human/Machine hot war start right up; it had to be a twilight struggle, and not limited to those two organizations.

Humans tend to split when no longer united by a common enemy. Also, AIs—Exiles, in the Matrix—have motives at odds with the Machine Civilization. So there's plenty of trouble, just not a neat duality.

How will players interact with the main characters of the Matrix movies?

They will do so indirectly for the most part. On missions, you'll find recordings of their voices, transcripts of recordings and other written records. But greatly skilled players will find them on the most difficult missions, and actually converse with them. We have recorded a branching tree of dialogue for some of our main characters, so you'll actually hear voices, not just read dialogue in the chat field.

Of course, all players can view the cinematics as they're released. They'll see what's happening to those characters that way, and be able to react in their gameplay to those developments. Rarely, the major characters will be visible on the street. It will be fleeting, though occasionally spectacular.

The game has three major factions: the Machine Civilization, the Exiles and Zion. How are players going to interact with these groups and what effect do these factions have on the story?

You'll work for them by accepting missions. That's how you gain skills, weapons, powers and "level up." Each faction has a controller, with a distinctive personality (some are quite sassy and arrogant), who will dole out missions. I might add that in short order, there are four, five or more organizations, though some aren't interested in having redpills join them.

Can you give any hints about them?

They're reactions to developments in the story. One group forms for vengeance. One seeks power. One is misrepresenting itself and hiding its true motives. Another is a quasi-religion. Neo died for us, you know.

How is the world of The Matrix Online going to change over time?

It's best to be coy about this. The Machine Civilization realizes all these redpills will be restive, stuck in The City. So soon there will be other places to go, unbounded by the strict illusion of reality the Matrix aspires to be.

How does The Matrix Online tell a story that players can have an impact on, yet entertain a large player base and make everyone feel involved?

Our main strategy: set up mysteries that must be solved. The players who gather and share the clues, find the secret place, save the character in trouble, or otherwise contribute to the solution of a problem, will be covered with glory. We even have ways of keeping track of who helped, and will occasionally publish a list. We're conscious of what a social experience these games are, and we cater to that: status counts.

There's even one player who will get to appear in a cinematic we have one mapped out so that there's

only one path he can follow. Once somebody does that in gameplay, we'll use the character he's built and plug him into the cinematic we've otherwise already prepared.

There are also some situations where a big threat is coming that requires collective response. My analogy is a juggernaut that must be stopped by a deep ditch. Players are encouraged to grab shovels. Everybody who digs gets credit—but the one who lifts out the last, critical shovelful has a special place in the story.

What are your favorite innovations used in The Matrix Online? What do you think is really going to set it apart from other MMOGs?

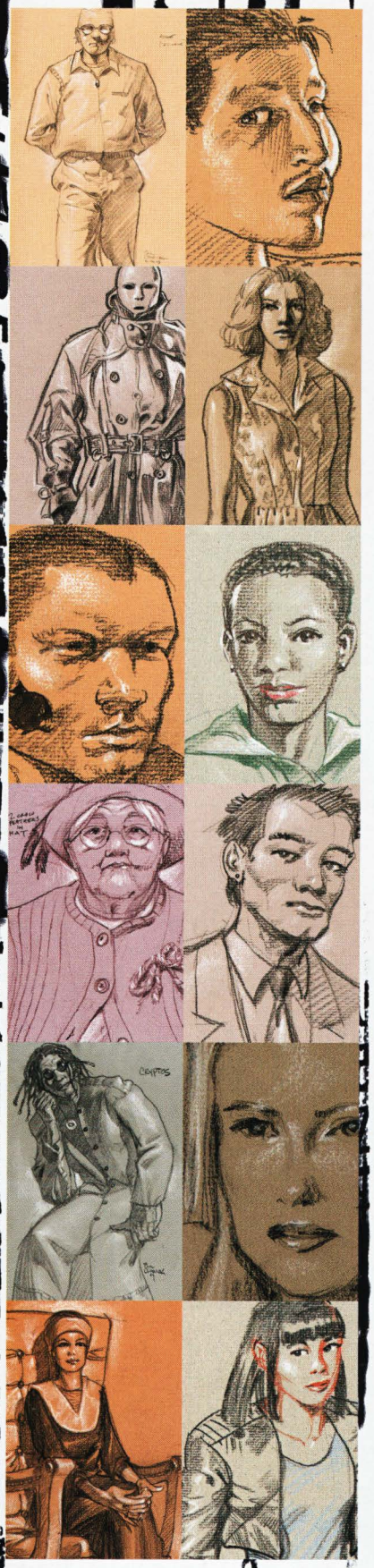
Speaking with naked self-interest, the density of story. We have quite a lot planned, including a "Citizen Kane"-exhumation of a characters' past, a murder mystery, a Promethean man-is-not-ready-for-such-power story, a revenge story, some peril-and-rescue situations, a tale of Matrix-born mental illness, a tragic love story and conspiracy upon betrayal upon religious fraud.

I'm also proud of the things we've done to increase the sense of story happening in a hundred ways at once. Rumors and information trading will be rampant. Exile AIs and players working for us at Monolith will be forwarding information we've scripted. Some rumors will be true, others disinformation.

There are even word puzzles, changing from month to month, in the environment, which reveal secrets about the ongoing story. When you see that advertising sign change with nonsense words, write them down—you can probably break the cypher, working with your friends. Or those letters dropped randomly on the street—follow the trail. Look up at the underside of the elevated street—something's written there. That sort of thing.

What would you suggest new players do to get into the story of The Matrix Online as quickly as possible?

Read *The Sentinel,* the newspaper published in The City, by clicking on any vending box. Check in to chat boards and websites that will accumulate around the game; people are proud to tell of their discoveries. They'll answer questions and give tips. Hook up, do a mission with more experienced players. Ask questions in the chat field. Agree to meet at the same place each evening and trade info on what you've learned. Don't be afraid to embarrass yourself; it's not like you can't just walk away and join another group. This gamespace is vast. X



By Patrick E. Bradley, W.D. Robinson and Lee Hammock

THE SLUMS

The residents of the Matrix call this area Richland, but most people usually refer to it simply as the Slums. Though the area is among the poorest and least desirable to the populace of The City, it is also a highly sought-after holding for those who understand the deceptive nature of the Matrix. Indeed, many powerful Exiles compete for control of its resources. The Slums is comprised of fifteen neighborhoods, each of which has a different character. Rest assured, however, that all of these areas also present a threat.

DECODING THE DISTRICTS

YOUR GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE SPRAWLING CITY AT THE HEART OF THE FIGHT FOR THE MATRIX

The Mara neighborhood is located in the north area of the Slums, just south of the waterfront industrial area and west of Achan. Of all the neighborhoods of the Slums, Mara may be the one most saturated with Exile gangs, notably the Blackwoods, the Bells and the Eighty-Eights. Mara is also a gateway neighborhood for several destinations, with bridges spanning to The City's Downtown and across the waterway to Westview.

Looking down on Tabor Park from above, it is easy to see it as an enclave along the south shore of the river. The current war between the Crossbones and the Demon Army Exile gangs makes the area dangerous for the Awakened. Tabor Park is primarily composed of older apartment buildings and office structures, but there has been some new growth and progress in the area, spawned by numerous Exiles moving to take control of the neighborhood's resources. A bridge from the Downtown area alights on the north side of the neighborhood, making it strategically valuable as one of a limited number of access points to the district.

Kedemoth is packed with middle-income residents enjoying the urban lifestyle. The streets and sidewalks are busy with worker traffic in the daytime, while the area's bars do a brisk business in the evenings, including the popular Club Duality. While many of the residential buildings were converted from hotels and textile sweatshops years ago, the area has also seen new growth.

THE SLUMS ARE RIFE WITH CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, URBAN DECAY AND RANDOM VIOLENCE.

Situated in the southwest corner of the Slums, Appolyon features a waterfront lined with seedy wharfs and deserted warehouses. Along the shore, long shadows fall on weathered buildings and beaten shop fronts. While the neighborhood boasts the popular Jacob's Ladder, a club that attracts denizens from far and wide, in the end Appolyon remains what it is, the last gasp of the Slums before the hell known as the Barrens.

THE BARRENS

To the west of the Slums lies the District officially called Westview, but more often referred to as the Barrens. While the Slums are a dirty, dilapidated place where hope seems a rare commodity, these traits take on a nearly admirable quality when contrasted with the Barrens. The primary groups of Exiles controlling the Barrens are, for lack of a better term, a family. The progenitors of this particular group are a pair of Exiles, known as Mr. Black and Dame White, who covet each other's power and work against one another through their children. The siblings constantly compete for the attention and favor of both parents, heedless of the cost.

THE SLUMS TAKE ON A NEARLY ADMIRABLE QUALITY WHEN CONTRASTED WITH THE BARRENS.

Centered on a large reservoir, the Guinness Lake neighborhood is named after the body of water that supposedly once existed there. The reservoir's water (and the code it represents) flows from here to the other parts of the Barrens, making it an ideal conduit for moving or dispersing code quickly throughout the district. The reservoir is an important area to hold, and as such it falls under the purview of Indigo, one of the Barrens' most powerful residents.

The Southard area is dominated by the expansive Southard Industrial Park that provides jobs for many residents of Gracy Heights and Guinness Lake. The facilities are often shut down for short periods due to the mishandling of chemical byproducts. North of the industrial park lies Southard's residential area, largely populated by those unable to afford to move elsewhere. Workers at the plants make just enough money to afford housing in the surrounding neighborhoods, so the direct neighbors of the Southard plants reap only the detrimental effects of their location. Compounding these problems, a number of structures have collapsed from disuse and, lacking any sign of renovation, have become shelters for transient and criminal elements.

Located at the north end of the Barrens, Bathary Row consists of the piers and warehouses of the Barrens' wharfs. Surrounded by ships waiting to be loaded and unloaded, the port's traffic is actually sparse, and many of the containers have been resting in their stacks for years. The wharf's atmosphere is distinctly criminal, and many of the warehouses are little more than fronts for illicit activities by bluepills and redpills alike. While normal trade and commerce does happen among the docks of Bathary Row, the underlying traffic is in information, which is ruthlessly controlled by the Bathary Boys gang of Exiles who are, in turn, answerable to an Exile named Cerulean.

Sometimes called "Little Mexico" because of the largest concentrations of Hispanics in The City, Lucero Point is sandwiched between Stamos on its north side and Rogers Way to the south. Fought over by a number of Exile interests, the true power in the neighborhood is the Sparks gang, who fight viciously to keep both redpills and fellow Exiles from gaining a foothold. X

Next issue: The tour continues through the International and Downtown Districts!

WHAT IS THE MATRIX

Before You Change The Future, You Must Understand The Past

By Paul Chadwick, head writer of The Matrix Online

Introduced in the three groundbreaking films by Andy and Larry Wachowski, the Matrix is a virtual, digital world that humans experience through feeds plugged directly into their nervous systems. It's totally convincing, a shared dream.

The dreamers know nothing else. Those experiencing it believe themselves to be in urban America at the turn of the 21st century; a vast Megacity and an adjacent mountain range are its only parts defined in the trilogy so far. The actual date is a couple of centuries later.

The proprietors of the Matrix are intelligent machines that have won a war with humankind. In the battle, the sky was "scorched," denying them solar power. Instead, the Machines use sleeping humans, enclosed in liquid-filled pods on vast batteries, to generate heat that becomes electricity. Humans, to them, are apparently something like slaves, farm animals...and perhaps more, as well.

Because humans are a cumbersome energy source, there may be another motivation to keep them alive. Entertainment? Worship toward their creators? A "preserve life" bit of programming that lingers in their operating systems? Like many things in the Matrix mythos, alternate explanations are possible.

Holding jobs and raising families, the humans in the pods experience "normal" life in the Matrix, unaware of their real state. But they can be Awakened to the truth.

NEO AND MORPHEUS

The first film in the trilogy, "The Matrix," tells the story of a young man, Neo, Awakened from the illusion and brought from his pod into the real world. His summoner, Morpheus, explains the true state of affairs. A community of free humans, based in the underground city of Zion, resist the Machines and work to defeat the Matrix system, which they see as slavery.

These free humans can jack back into the Matrix by lurking in service tunnels under the surface world in their hovercraft. But when they do enter the false world, they are ruthlessly hunted down by Agents of the Machines, who have the bland appearance of Secret Service-type operatives, sporting black suits, earplug radios and dark sunglasses.

Jacking into the Matrix, one can have spectacular fighting abilities, fearsome weapons—all code. But the Agents are powerful. And although it is a virtual reality, one can die in the Matrix. In fact, Neo does in the first film.

Neo's death, however, occurs at a moment of epiphany. Before his oxygen-starved brain finally shuts down, the beautiful warrior Trinity professes her love and belief in him.

It's a moving dramatization of the truth that we all can do more, be better, if someone loves and has faith in us. Neo rises again, confronts his antagonist, the astonished Agent Smith, and fulfills his destiny.

Neo's resurrection is not a shock to Morpheus, who has heard a prophecy that there is a lone individual—the One—who can control the Matrix's virtual reality by will alone. All along, Morpheus has believed Neo is the One, despite the skepticism of those around him.

MATRIX TERMINOLOGY 101

BLUEPILL: Humans who remain jacked into the Matrix unaware that it is a facade.

EXILE: A program that has fled from the Source, the Machine mainframe, to hide in the Matrix. Exiles are often obsolete, damaged, or unnecessary programs targeted for deletion.

HARDLINE: A landline telephone that redpills use to jack into and out of the Matrix. A hardline is required for changing your abilities as well as other functions.

REDPILL: A person who has been Awakened to the truth of the Matrix by Zion through swallowing a red pill, a physical representation of a program that assists in the Awakening process.

The film ends full of new possibilities. The One's powers have awakened. A war is coming. Mysteries linger. Never has a movie ached more for a sequel.

THE EXILES—AIs IN THE MATRIX RELOADED

"The Matrix Reloaded" deepens the conception of the Matrix. Along with humans and Agents of the Machines in the Matrix, there are free, sentient programs—Exiles—enjoying life as humans in the virtual world.

The Exiles are varied. The Oracle, for example, is benign, and guides Morpheus and other humans in their quest.

The Merovingian, a.k.a. the Frenchman, is a sybaritic gangster, commanding a host of human-

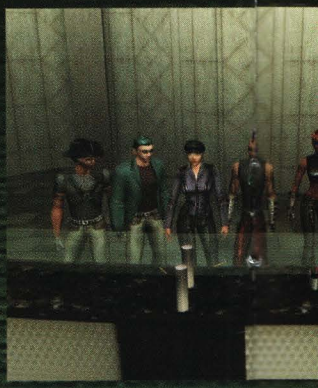
formed programs with powers like ghosts, werewolves, and other supernatural entities.

There's also a wild card, Agent Smith. Instead of being destroyed by Neo in the first film, as he seemed to be, Agent Smith has become an independent virus-like program who can replicate himself, and overwrite others—creating a legion of lethal clones.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MATRIX: REPEATED DESTRUCTION

Neo encounters the crowning complexity when he meets the Architect. A white-bearded man, direct and arrogant, he is the program who designed the Matrix.

The Architect reveals that there were previous iterations of the Matrix that failed—even previous Ones like Neo—and that a bloody cycle of destruction and renewal of the Matrix, Zion and humanity is inescapable. And it's about to happen again.



Neo won't accept this. He intends to save it all. But first he saves the woman he loves, Trinity, from death by spectacularly reaching into her torso and bringing her virtual heart back into pulsing life. Ironically, it is Neo's capacity for love that makes him the mightiest warrior, the One.

"The Matrix Revolutions" begins with this crisis still imminent. This time the Matrix is failing because of Agent Smith's viral takeover of every individual in it. It's cleansing, and the destruction of Zion by the squid-like Sentinel machines, is almost underway.

JOURNEY TO THE SURFACE OF THE WORLD

Neo does the impossible; he and Trinity break out of the underground and fly a hovercraft to the city of Machines on the surface world. Blind from a fight with Agent Smith (inhabiting the form of Bane, a human whom Smith has overwritten) and grieving for Trinity (who is killed when they crash), Neo gains an audience with a godlike Machine entity. There is still Zion and the rest of humanity to save.

Neo proposes this: he'll defeat the fast-spreading Smith, whose cancerous growth threatens all the Machines, in exchange for peace between the Machines and the free humans. A deal is struck.

Neo battles Agent Smith in the Matrix as Smith's viral clones look on. It's like two sky gods fighting to the death (and some of the most surreal images ever committed to film).

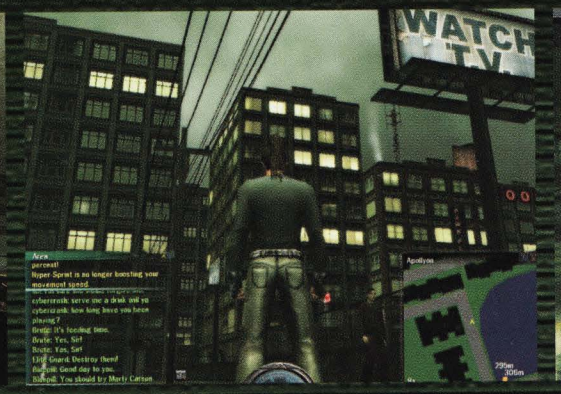
With an assist from the Oracle (who, with curious equanimity, allows Agent Smith to overwrite her), succeeds in destroying his tireless foe. However Neo apparently dies in the effort. But his sacrifice is not in vain. The Matrix is saved. Zion is saved. And so is the Machine Civilization.

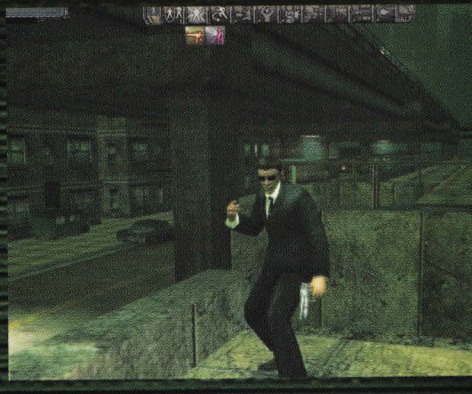
THE TRUCE

A truce is made—free humans (redpills) are even allowed to awaken the sleepers (bluepills), although too much of this activity can threaten the Matrix. It's one of the ambiguities that the Matrix films unflinchingly allowed to stand.

Another mystery: Neo's fate. He seems to have died in the battle with Smith. But the Machines do not return his corpse. It's last seen carried into the distance on a floating platform, like a fallen Viking warrior on a raft, drifting out to sea.

Why won't they return his remains? This dis-





turbs some people, and their actions set the story of The Matrix Online in motion.

YOU, REDPILL

Players in The Matrix Online do not assume identities of characters from the films. Those surviving characters are in the continuing story, and may be encountered in the game. You'll at least see them in the short movies—"cinematics"—which will be added to The Matrix Online every so often. But the ramifications of their actions will affect what you do, since all the organizations react to them.

The premise of The Matrix Online is that you are a recently Awakened former bluepill. You're finding your feet as a redpill, jacking into the Matrix from a patched-together hovercraft (remember, they were destroyed in the Battle of Zion in "The Matrix Revolutions") that's little more than a jacking-in platform.

But all of the game takes place in the Matrix itself. Apart from a white-space loading program, where you choose where you'll appear in the Matrix when you jack in (and organize your arsenal of weapons, abilities and fighting techniques), you'll find yourself in The City...and a few other virtual worlds. But those are for you to discover.

WILL WORK FOR TOOLS, WEAPONS AND POWERS

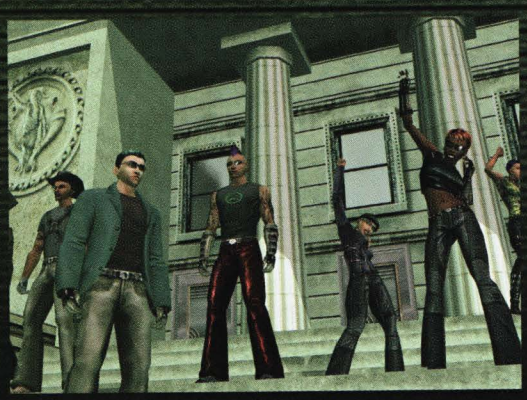
Zion, the Machine Civilization (Agents), and the Merovingian all offer missions. Successfully complete them, and you gain abilities, guns, tools and power. As the story develops, more organizations form. Most (not all) offer missions. Some just want to kill you.

It's important to overcome your shyness about participating in missions. This is where the cutting edge of the story appears. You'll encounter voice recordings, transcripts and other written artifacts generated by the characters from the films. And, if you're accomplished enough, you'll encounter the characters themselves.

We've recorded a myriad of snippets of dialogue for these characters; they'll be able to instruct and direct you on a path where you encounter more story and more challenges.

WORD GETS OUT

Story percolates outward from the missions, of course. Rumor and recap by both people and



non-player characters (NPCS) eventually get it out to everybody. Then there's *The Sentinel*, a newspaper published in The City. Click on any vending box for a popup window where you can read it. It's written by bluepills, though, so it has a slightly dazed, rationalized take on the clashes of redpills and Exiles. There's also a straightforward text recap, reachable through a secret link. And one more thing: study advertising signs. Notice the letters placed on the street. Check out that new graffiti. There are...messages.

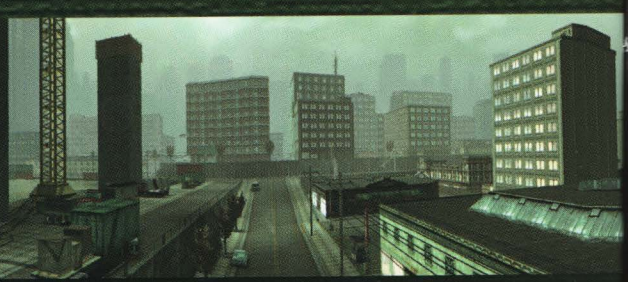
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

I don't know what master plan the Wachowskis have for the world of the Matrix. When asked about their future plans, they evade with jokes. They haven't revealed their story direction for the game beyond the first year.

They've spoken of "turning the Matrix over to its fans," which this game, in a sense, does. But they're also keeping tabs on it, preventing it from straying from their vision, and the rigorous logic that I've increasingly come to realize underlies all of the Matrix films, anime, comics and games.

But I do know there's scope for more stories in the Matrix. A lot more. In our first year, we've got a murder mystery, a "Citizen Kane"-like exhumation of a character's past, a revenge story, a tragic love story, betrayals, rescues, lies, schemes, mental illness, new worlds and many other story threads.

Add a city full of people, super powers and a virtual world with secret factions—the possibilities, like the Matrix itself, just may be endless. X



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* RADEON XT PE 256MB DDR compared with NVIDIA's GeForce 6800 Ultra 256MB DDR, as measured by Far Cry, Thief3, NHL2004, UT2004 DM 1:1 Albatross, Battlefield: Vietnam, Rise of Nations and Splinter Cell. Testing conducted April 15, 2004 on the following system: AMD64 3700+ 1GB DDR400. 1600x1200 4XAA 16XAF.